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THE
R Butler
BISHOP OF HEREFORD'S
PASTORAL LETTER,

TO THE
INHABITANTS OF HIS DIOCESE,

ON OCCASION OF THE GREAT
VICTORY OBTAINED BY HIS MAJESTY'S FLEET,
ON THE COAST OF EGYPT.

—HEREFORD—

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THE
BISHOP OF HEREFORD'S
PASTORAL LETTER.

Dearly Beloved Brethren,

THE Scripture moveth us in sundry places, to be thankful to ALMIGHTY GOD for every good and happiness we enjoy, and to submit with patience and resignation to his Divine Will, under every affliction we suffer. We have had occasions for the exercise of both these duties for six or seven years past; and I have made observations, at leisure, upon the manner in which they have been exercised.

Your Minister of God's word has doubtless laid before you the strongest motives arising from the occasion; but as some of you may have been absent from him, either in person, or in your thoughts, and
others

others appear to have forgotten what hath been said, you will bear with me, I hope, if, with much good-will to you, I attempt to second him, by following you, and addressing your hearts at home, on the important occasion now uppermost in your minds.

The unjust war in which our King and nation are involved, has produced many new instances of wickedness, and unheard-of cruelties, in the hearts of our enemies, and in consequence many evils have befallen us, and great part of the Christian world. Private men, under the sense of some of these evils, have been distressed, what to think of so great, and, as they judged, undeserved calamities; and some believers in God and a Providence have been perplexed, how to answer the enemies of Religion, when they argued from our troubles, against God's righteous government of the world. I have advised such as I heard uttering this rashness, to wait for the end, and fix the hope of That in their minds, against so impious a thought. But my advice was ineffectual, whilst our troubles continued, and our enemy triumphed.

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At last a brave Admiral has sent an express to tell us, with a truth, experienced by himself, that “AL-
“MIGHTY GOD has blest his Majesty’s Arms, in the
“late battle, with a great victory over the fleet of the
“enemy.”

My private reflections, on the old question about Providence, led me to the case of the most remarkable sufferer, by Divine permission, in his WORLDLY prosperity, who bore the utmost extremes of human misery with patience; was insulted by his friends, robbed and impoverished, suffered pains almost intolerable from a nauseous disease, which, God be praised, is unknown to us, under this climate; and yet neither laid violent hands upon himself, nor doubted the goodness, whilst he felt the power, of God; and was at last delivered from all his misery, and restored to more than his former prosperity, by express Divine appointment. This we are told in the finest poem, and you may read it in the book of Job.

I shall not enter into any dispute about the age of the book. I should refer you to the learned for that,
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if I thought it worth your enquiry, for they differ in opinion about it. But I believe, that there was such a man, so upright, so miserable, and so patient; and shall state to you, in few words, the moral and religious merits of holy Job, his sufferings, his patience, and his recovery. It was a lesson for nations, and for private men in distress, and an answer to the Christians, who were perplexed by God's permission of our public troubles from such hands; and to the unbelievers, who had already said in their hearts, "There is no God," and had acted accordingly.

I have stated this unhappy man's external condition and distemper, from holy Scripture. But he suffered, besides, inward misery from the friends who came to comfort him, and were all prepossessed with an opinion, which he knew to be false, and could not in conscience assent to, that God never suffered any but the most wicked sinners to be so severely afflicted. He felt his misery, and was not conscious of any remarkable sins. They having none to charge him with, pleaded that his sufferings were an evidence

evidence of secret guilt. He persisted in protesting his innocence; and they, being sincere in their error, advised him to repent. In the midst of this torment, internal and external, when both sides grew warm and unguarded in the debate, God himself is represented to have interposed for the deliverance of the unhappy man from such various trouble. The warm mistaken friends were dismissed with a censure, not being able to dispute the decision of the Almighty, and Job was restored wonderfully to his health, his country, his family, and an accumulated wealth, which he lived to enjoy many years.

This is a history, which the Providence of God laid before mankind, very early, in a world which would exhibit to their view, and inflict upon their feelings, a variety of dispensations, all tending to accomplish some good and great design of Providence.

Now, my good Friends and fellow Christians, let us apply this instructive story to what has happened to us, and a great part of Europe, for some years past.

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Our fears and doubts about a Divine Providence arose from our ignorance, and a concern for our **WORLDLY** prosperity. I therefore chose to state to you the case of Job, as he was ruined and at the point of death.

We have been tormented with apprehensions of danger from a system of robbery, murder, anarchy, irreligion, and a complication of every evil under the sun, erected against all regular governments, and all quiet, industrious subjects, in countries well cultivated, and some of them inaccessible by any but by an armed multitude of desperate men. The conspirators pretended to be equal in rank to their governors, and wiser than any laws human and divine. They promised liberty to the ignorant and affluence to the needy; and made use of these instruments, to overturn the national religion, plunder the property of the church, degrade and impoverish the nobility and gentry, and at last to seize the persons of the King and his Royal Family, to murder him and his beloved Queen, and his pious Sister, **UNMERCIFULLY**, as if there were no God in Heaven, nor any power on earth, to withstand them,

them, and PUBLICLY, as if there was not a subject who had sworn allegiance.

ONE nation, however, appeared to them to abhor the whole of their savage iniquity, and we had the honour to be that nation. Against us, therefore, they directed their diabolical malice, by pointing the beginning of sorrows, a declaration of war, against our Sovereign, on the supposition, that he and his people must condemn so wicked a transaction. But in order to prepare the minds of their own people for a bloody war, they first committed such domestic violences, to impress submission upon them, as filled the world with amazement, and soon turned our minds from commerce to war. We were alarmed by threats of an invasion, which might, without resistance, have proved fatal to our Constitution, to our wealth, and to our lives. For what quarter could we expect from robbers and murderers, who had suddenly turned the politest nation into a body of mere savages, more so, than any we have read of in ancient or modern history? The war was, therefore, big with the danger
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of becoming uncommonly bloody, and nationally destructive.

Whilst we were preparing for it with all the spirit which our alarm had left us, we fell into another calamity, resulting from it. The great demand for the maintenance of our forces by sea and land, succeeding to an unfavourable harvest, dispirited us, under a rash apprehension of being reduced to want, which alone has sometimes produced dangerous insurrection. But the wisdom of our Governors relieved us under this fear, and the Providence of ALMIGHTY GOD removed it intirely, by a plentiful harvest.

We now thought ourselves encouraged to proceed with vigour, when, unexpectedly, in the next year, a pestilence befel us---not a contagious one to our bodies, but a more formidable contagion to the minds of some of those men, who were necessary instruments of our defence---a mutiny in a small part of our navy, which might have spread so rapidly, as to render our best endeavours ineffectual. The secret prayers

prayers of good men, who foresaw the extent of this evil, and the wise measures of our Sovereign, of his circumspect Counsellors, and faithful Officers, stopped the contagion from spreading far.

The enemy being thus disappointed in their designs against our King and nation, made amusing offers of peace, which could not be accepted, without slavery on our part; and then turned their mischievous projects to a new and remote object, to set up a Republic in EGYPT, where, forgetting or disbelieving the wonders of God, in delivering his peculiar people from oppression, they erected their standard, and offered motives to the subjects of that Government for rebelling against their lawful Governors. The hand of God led the arms of our Sovereign thither, and we now rejoice at the Victory which ensued, and which may, we humbly hope, produce a lasting Peace.

This short and imperfect view of our sufferings, and the end of them, seems sufficient to apply our hearts unto WISDOM---that is, to the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom; to a devout submission
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to all his dispensations, how formidable soever; to a profound gratitude to him, which is very consistent with a reasonable joy; and to a firm resolution to become henceforward the faithful servants of our Almighty Protector, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

I am sensible, there is a much greater example of patience, than Job. He came down from Heaven for our sakes, and underwent all the humiliations our nature is capable of, to offer a full sacrifice for the sins of the world. We bless and adore him daily for his inestimable love. But Job's distress was more like that which we apprehended and escaped lately. It was the loss of all his **WORLDLY** happiness, which neither he nor his friends knew how to account for, till God himself explained it.

For God's sake and your own, I beseech you, my dearly beloved Brethren, to express your joy chiefly, by Thankfulness to the hand from which you have received the mercy. I do not, like the friends of the unhappy patient man, whose case I have been recommending

commending to your attention, charge our sufferings intirely to our sins. They appear to result in great measure from the horrible sins of our enemies; but we may learn from them, that the righteous judgments of God will be vindicated at last, and are not subjects of murmuring or despair, but of humble admiration and patience, at all times, and in all cases.

Our reason is much too proud, when it sits in judgment upon the ways of Heaven. We cannot see far before us, into the remote effects of a present painful case. Have patience with your God. He will clear up all our doubts in his own time, and in his own unerring effectual manner. Hear the words of the great sufferer JOB: "God understandeth the way of wisdom, and he knoweth the place thereof; and unto man he saith, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding," (chap. xxviii.)

Oh! that we were all possessed of wisdom and this understanding, in the first place! The world will find employment for our understandings in other respects.

respects. But this of fearing God, and departing from evil, is understanding in the first and highest sense. You must have heard this often. If you have ever forgot it, let the last six or seven years impress it deeply upon your minds. I do not reproach you with that forgetfulness. It is natural to frail and sinful creatures. But it is unbecoming creatures to whom God has revealed his will, his word, and his works.

Let not the world conceal from us his mercies, with our eyes open, and our hearts apparently full of joy in the God of our Salvation. He hath now prospered us, and covered our Navy in a day of battle. He will, we trust, continue to protect us, if we act up to the truth of our condition, by confessing our own weakness, and his Almighty Power.

An earthquake is a natural event. But the stoutest among us would look up to God in the instant of an earthquake. I remember a general piety under an apprehension of it. And are war, famine, and pestilence, less to be dreaded than an earthquake, or the deliver-

deliverance from them less to be hoped for from the hand of God?

Let us be wise in time, instructed as we are by the late prosperous event. Let us recollect, when we exult in our might, on how many contingencies it depends, and that our thanksgiving to God would be vain-boasting, if we did not believe in our hearts, that HE, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the World, can alone give wisdom to the rulers, and fortitude to the defenders, of so complex and intricate a machine, as the best governed state, the wisest Constitution, and the most tremendous forces.

I trust, you will take this Letter in good part. It can have no other object than it professes---to dispose a people so signally blessed, to become as zealous of good works, as they are of national wealth and consequence.

I remain till death,

My dear Friends,

Your faithful humble Minister,

J. HEREFORD.

Oct. 11, 1798.

In June 1798 B^p Butler of Hereford held his triennial
-sitation by Commissioners; on which occasion his B^p
transmitted to his Clergy the following pastoral address
which was received thro'out the diocese, with the gre
test respect & affection:

Hereford June 7th

"Good Mr Chancellor — With an entire confidence
the due attention to every wish of my heart, in comm
-ting to your care the duties incumbent upon me at
this visitation, I cannot resist the impulse I feel to
-quest you particularly to commend me in the most af
-fectionate terms to my Reverend Brethren; & to assure them
that nothing but the most unavoidable necessity could
have absented me from them on this occasion — They
would sympathize with me & forgive me, if they knew
my disease, nor the natural consequence of having passed
what the Psalmist calls "the age of labour & sorrow." —
great part of my life, has been spent in this office &
hope, if it please God to continue the little understand
I have left, to devote ^{it} entirely to his Service & theirs. — The
times require active men in every station, & I trust that
they will mutually exhort one another as well as the
parishioners, to the duty of relying on Divine Providence
whilst they cherish in themselves & those under their
all the zeal & affection which every one of us owes to his
Religion, his King, & his Country. — So, wishing you ever
blessing from Heaven, — I remain very truly,

Dear Sir

Your loving Brother & Servant

J. Hereford. "30

